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SUBJECT: MCNS TO REVIEW SECURITY PLANS

REF: BAGHDAD 1169

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for reasons 1.4 (a), (b), (d)).

¶1. (S//REL GBR AUS) SUMMARY: The Ministerial Committee for National Security (MCNS) convened the morning of April 9 at PM Jafari's residence to follow up on discussions held the previous evening (reftel). The Committee first addressed Operation Scales of Justice, on which there is a difference of opinion between MNF-I and PM Jafari about objectives and execution. It was agreed that in the coming days MNF-I will provide a briefing on the operation. The Committee then began to review a draft National Emergency Response Plan being prepared by National Security Advisor Dr. Mowaffak al-Rubaie. This plan would provide a template for how the GOI would respond to "catastrophic events," whether security-related or natural/humanitarian. MinDef Dulime, re-raising a point from the previous evening, stated that the country already is experiencing a "catastrophe." Dulime expressed concern about whether the existing security plans for Iraq and Baghdad are effective. PM Jafari acknowledged difficulties and said that he is not averse to re-evaluating the plans; however, he urged Dulime and others to remember the progress that has been made.

¶2. (S//REL GBR AUS) SUMMARY CONT'D: Minister of State for National Security Affairs Karim al-Anzi urged the creation of two new divisions to respond to emergency needs as well as the development of a more robust intelligence capability. Ambassador noted that a crisis in confidence may be emerging with regard to the security plan, and he urged the committee to address the problem head-on. He also noted that the impending government transition provides another reason to re-evaluate what has been accomplished and how best to proceed. The meeting concluded with decisions to (1) embark upon a review of the overall security plan, (2) work with MNF-I to better understand the objectives and timeline of Operation Scales of Justice, and (3) continue to develop the National Emergency Response Plan. END SUMMARY.

¶3. (S//REL GBR AUS) The April 9 MCNS meeting was a continuation of the meeting held the previous evening. Members of the committee who were present: PM Jafari, MinDef Dulime, Interior Minister Jabr, Minister of State for National Security Affairs al-Anzi, National Security Advisor Rubaie, Ambassador, British Ambassador Patey, and MNF-I Deputy Commanding General (DCG) Fry. Also present were MNF-I Deputy Chief of Staff Major General Findley and the PM's senior military advisor Kanini.

OPERATION SCALES OF JUSTICE, CONTINUED

¶4. (S//REL GBR AUS) Returning to a subject he had raised the previous evening, PM Jafari asked for a summary of Operation Scales of Justice, noting that he believes its objectives and timeline need to be better defined. Jafari recalled that a major goal of the operation is to attack terrorist strongholds in the Abu Ghraib area and spread out from there.

In addition, Jafari added, he thought that these raids would take place right away when the operation began early in March. He and MinDef both said the operation is concentrating on the center of Baghdad at the expense of the outlying areas (locus of many of the problems).

¶5. (S//REL GBR AUS) DCG Fry responded that his recollection of the genesis of the operation generally matches the PM's. The goal, Fry explained, was to run two major operations at one time: the security plan for Arba'en (which would rely overwhelmingly on Iraqi Security Forces) and increased operations in Baghdad (for which additional Coalition Forces (CF) would be called from Kuwait to assist). This had been done, Fry reported, with the result being a higher concentration of CF in Baghdad than ever before. With regard to the timing and nature of the operation, Fry recalled what Dulime had said the previous night about having to adjust operations to changes made by the enemy. Fry added that Dulime's comments about the need to "close the gates" of Baghdad are insightful and will be reflected in the development of the operation. Fry urged the PM to keep an open mind on how the future of the operation will develop and said that he, CG Casey, and the MNC-I CG would discuss this with the Ministers of Defense and Interior and then brief the PM. The PM expressed satisfaction with this course of action and acknowledged that it is not possible to fully appreciate the success of the operation because there is simply no way of telling what acts of terror it has prevented.

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NATIONAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN

¶6. (S//REL GBR AUS) Rubaie passed around a briefing paper on a draft National Emergency Response Plan on which he has been working. (NOTE: Although he claimed that he had mailed it to all the committee members two weeks ago, some of them were clearly looking at it for the first time. END NOTE.) The idea for such a plan emerged following the February 22 bombing of the al-Askariyah mosque in Samarra. Its purpose is to serve as a plan that can be activated immediately in the case of a catastrophe caused either by a security incident (e.g., another mosque attack, death of Grand Ayatollah Sistani) or a natural disaster (e.g., flood, earthquake, etc.). The plan is similar to a standard operating procedure that comprises a checklist of actions to be taken in proper sequence, so that, in an emergency, officials (including the highest levels of the government) will have a plan to follow. Rubaie began to read down the checklist but did not get far. MinDef Dulime, clearly frustrated about a number of things, protested that it is foolish to be planning for future "catastrophes" when the country is already in one. He cited international and Iraqi figures who claim that Iraq is on the verge of a civil war, the most recent being Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. Dulime said that his forces are exhausted and would be unable to shift focus immediately to respond to the type of emergency Rubaie's plan contemplates.

DEBATE ABOUT SECURITY PLAN

¶7. (S//REL GBR AUS) Rubaie agreed with Dulime that Iraq is experiencing a catastrophe but stopped short of calling it a civil war. He said he prefers the term "civil conflict." According to Rubaie, the problem he is trying to address is how to be ready to respond to a crisis above and beyond what

is already taking place. In addition, Rubaie said, the questions Dulime raised regarding the capabilities of the forces are valid but more strategic in nature. Dulime repeated his view that the country is already in a catastrophe; although statistics say the number of attacks in Baghdad is down, to him this does not signal an improvement in the situation. Dulime urged a fundamental re-examination of the security plan, noting that he questions the need for a long-term plan given that the enemy is constantly changing tactics.

¶8. (S//REL GBR AUS) Minister of State for National Security Affairs al-Anzi argued that the forces are not inadequate; instead, the problem lies in how to use them more effectively. The Iraqi intelligence capabilities, he explained, have not been developed quickly enough to keep pace with the military and security forces. He then urged the rapid development of agencies similar to the U.S. FBI or CIA, which he said would use modern and scientific means to more effectively guide the deployment of military forces. He also recommended the creation of two new Iraqi Army divisions to be held in reserve for emergency response at the behest of the PM.

¶9. (S//REL GBR AUS) PM Jafari said he is not opposed to rethinking the plan but stressed that its positive results must be recognized. He urged the group to recall what the security situation was like when they took office and then compare it to today. In addition, Jafari said, each experience and each mistake makes them wiser and more capable of facing future problems. He urged that a lack of performance or speed in all cases should not lead them to doubt the merits of the plan. It is imperative, he asserted, that the committee continue to "review, review, and review" the plan. Responding to Dulime and al-Anzi, Jafari said that he agrees that forces are stretched thinly and that by now perhaps Iraq should have a more effective intelligence community. Still, Jafari noted, security during Arba'en was outstanding, attack levels are down, and ISF are performing much better than before.

¶10. (S//REL GBR AUS) Rubaie said that, although there have been many great security accomplishments in the past few months, the sectarian threat (he explicitly said he is not calling it a militia threat) has now become significant. As a result, he said, it is necessary to reexamine the PM's twelve-point security plan that was developed last July. Rubaie revealed that he has been constructing a matrix of the twelve points in order to evaluate their effectiveness (given

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the changing nature of the threat and the enemy). When al-Anzi asked Rubaie to elaborate, Rubaie pointed out that the number of car bombings is down while the number of sectarian killings is up. Before February 22, Rubaie said, the MCNS agreed on who the enemy was; however, he said he is not sure all members are in agreement now.

NEED FOR A RE-EVALUATION?

¶11. (S//REL GBR AUS) Ambassador observed that listening to this conversation led him to conclude that some of the ministers are experiencing a crisis of confidence in the overall security plan. Day-to-day adjustments to plans must always be made, he said, but there is nothing wrong with periodically taking a comprehensive look at an ongoing plan to make sure the problem it seeks to address is correctly identified, the strategy is correctly defined, and the resources to achieve the goals sought are adequate. The fact that the government will be undergoing a transition is another reason that now might be a good time to take an honest, frank look at the way ahead, Ambassador suggested. He likened the plan to a medical treatment: you have to correctly diagnose the disease before you can correctly treat

a medical condition. If you get the diagnosis wrong, the treatment could prove disastrous. Ambassador stated that the MCNS and MNF-I together need to agree on what the problem is, what our goals are, and what is the proper approach to achieve those goals. British Ambassador Patey agreed that, as our strategy against the insurgents has begun to show results, the time is right for a review.

¶12. (S//REL GBR AUS) DCG Fry responded to al-Anzi's call for increased intelligence capabilities and two additional Iraqi Army divisions by pointing out that the keys to military success are to fight the current fight, not blindly but in a constantly evolving way, and to look constantly ahead. In the meantime, Fry noted, you must fight with what you have. DCG Fry said that it seems there is agreement that the enemy has changed and a new approach is needed; what is yet to be agreed upon is what changes are needed.

¶13. (S//REL GBR AUS) The meeting concluded with agreement that there will be a review of the overall security plan, that Iraqi authorities will work with MNF-I on the plan for security in Baghdad, and that Rubaie will continue to refine his draft emergency response plan, which will be discussed further at a later date.

COMMENT

¶14. (S//REL GBR AUS) The discussion was a healthy exchange of views. Dulime is clearly frustrated, perhaps in part because he knows that he may not be long for his post. Al-Anzi sounded his familiar themes of calling for more Iraqi-generated intelligence and for greater Iraqi independence in the conduct of operations. Jabr sat silent for the most part, except for protesting once that the plan to secure Baghdad has not advanced as quickly as he would have liked. Jafari tried to keep spirits up, and Rubaie argued for the need for a changed approach to meet changing circumstances. The ISF have made great strides, the battle against the insurgents and terrorists is yielding results, and it is positive that the MCNS is beginning to see that the nature of the threat to long-term Iraqi stability may be changing.
KHALILZAD